STEP House Style and general guidance

Preface: general guidance

Style Guide

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This style guide applies to all STEP content, in print and online. Email editor@step.org for the full STEP House Style.

Voice
- All copy should be engaging, accurate, succinct, informative, and readable.
- Employ a fairly formal style, avoiding exclamation marks, too many colloquialisms, etc.
- In general, use active tenses and try to avoid passive constructions. Split infinitives are accepted.
- Highly technical articles will necessarily use technical language, but avoid jargon where plain English will suffice.
- Avoid clichés: 'at the end of the day', 'thinking outside the box', etc.
- Bear in mind the presumed readership of the content. Most readers of STEP publications will be professionals with extensive knowledge of the general field, but who may be unfamiliar with the particular matter dealt with in the piece – clarity of expression is vital.

International style
- Use British spelling and style over US ( -ise not -ize, -re not -er, and –our not –or).
- STEP is an international society and this is reflected in the way content is written. Do not assume that every STEP member knows that there is a general election in the UK. Generally, employ language that puts a topic or individual in an international context.
- The use of pronouns such as ‘we’ should be undertaken with care. If referring to a particular jurisdiction, avoid using the term ‘we’ to mean people in the country in question. Similarly, avoid saying ‘here’ or ‘here in the US’, as this is too subjective and gives the writing a localised feel that does not sit well when addressing members of an international society.
- When referring to legal institutions or official bodies, use internationally understandable terminology and make it clear where they are based.
- Be mindful when talking about seasons. Avoid ‘summer’ and ‘fall’, not everyone is on the same schedule. Avoid constructions such as ‘biannual’ and ‘bi-monthly’, which can lead to confusion. Use ‘twice-yearly’ or ‘two-yearly’ instead.

Legal
Contributors must check the veracity of their article and/or quotes/comments thoroughly to ensure articles are free from any material inaccuracies, false statements, potentially defamatory
comments, or any other content that may give rise to a legal claim in the United Kingdom or elsewhere. In the event of any doubt, the relevant content must be removed immediately.

**Content**
Promotional material is not accepted in the editorial space. Commercial opportunities are available at [www.step.org/step-journal/advertise](http://www.step.org/step-journal/advertise). The only mention of an author’s organisation will be in the byline at the end, unless for some reason (possibly for a case study or interview) it is necessary to include some information in the article itself. Website URLs or contact details are no included for authors in print or online. Company disclaimers are not included; STEP has a standard disclaimer, which is found [here](http://www.step.org).

**Editing**
STEP reserves the right to amend articles to comply with our House Style and Editorial Guidelines. Articles are edited for meaning, tone, house style, grammar, readability and so on. Only substantive edits and amends where the meaning may have been changed are queried with the author. By submitting an article, the submitter accepts the above. If a proof of the articles is required prior to publication, this must be requested in advance.

**Accuracy**
- Check all facts and figures carefully and, if necessary, clear their use with the appropriate authority.
- Ensure all references to organisations of any kind, people, events, etc. are expressed accurately.
- When reprinting articles that have been published elsewhere, and for all images or photography, submitters must ensure they check for any necessary credits/copyright and include as specified.

**STEP-specific points of style**
- ‘STEP is’, not ‘STEP are’; STEP, not STEP Worldwide.
- STEP geographical regions: Africa; Arabia; Asia; Australasia; Canada; Caribbean and Latin America; Continental Europe; Crown Dependencies; UK and Ireland and US. Note that, apart from when referring to ‘STEP USA’, house style is simply ‘US’.

**Style Guide**

**Emphasis**
Underline, bold or italic formatting is not used for emphasis.

**Italics**
Do not italicise for emphasis. Italicise the titles of books, newspapers, magazines, journals, legislation (when using the official name), albums, films and paintings. Request the STEP House Style Guide from [editor@step.org](mailto:editor@step.org) for further guidance.
Abbreviations and acronyms
As a rule, spell out the name in full in the first instance, with the abbreviation in round brackets after it, without speech marks. Subsequently, write only the abbreviation: The Financial Action Task Force (FATF). Thereafter, the FATF.

Certain well-known abbreviations need not be written out in full. For example, CV, EU, OECD, UK, US, UAE.

Author by-lines
Follow the following style: author(s), job title, company name and country. No qualification letters, contact details or any other author information is included, apart from the letters TEP and/or honours (OBE, CBE, MBE, etc.) and/or QC, and these precede TEP in the byline.

- Joe Bloggs QC OBE TEP is a Barrister at Law Chambers, UK.

Contractions
Avoid (e.g. hasn’t, can’t, aren’t, it’s, what’s) unless in a more chatty article or a direct quote.

Dates / time / numbers / symbols / currency
- Use a forward slash for financial years: tax year 2016/2017.
- Decades: the 1990s (no apostrophe).

Numbers
- Words used from one to ten, numerals from 11 upwards. Do not start a sentence with a numeral, unless it is a heading.
- Fractions should be spelt out in full (two-thirds) but may be expressed in numerals in tables or other text figures.
- Use commas to indicate thousands: 1,000 / 10,000 / 100,000.

Currency
Use the ISO codes for currencies in main text and footnotes. For a full list of currency codes, see www.xe.com/symbols.htm
- Twenty thousand Euros – EUR20,000
- GBP4.5 million, USD10 billion, EUR11.5 billion
- Multimillion USD investment

Percentages
Spell out fully in body and footnotes, use numerals within percentages: 9 per cent. In tables and other text figures, the % symbol should be used.
Gender
- Avoid being gender-specific (he/she) unless it is appropriate. Use the plural form if possible, to avoid clumsy constructions.

Geographical terms and countries
Ensure that when using UK it is being referred to as a whole and not just England and Wales. Scotland and Northern Ireland have different legislation. Avoid using ‘Britain’ or the ‘British Isles’ entirely.

Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man are not part of the UK, nor are they a part of the EU, they are part of the British Isles and should be labelled as British Crown Dependencies (CDs).

British Overseas Territories (OTs) are under the jurisdiction and sovereignty of the UK but do not form part of the UK. They have a different constitutional relationship with the UK to the Crown Dependencies. CDOTs is the collective term for the British Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories.

Lists
When listing points, prefer bullet points to numbers, unless there is a need to refer to individual bullet points later/throughout the copy.

Generally, lists should be one of two kinds, those composed of fragments or full sentences. However, in certain types of content, such as brochures or conference programmes, lists do not need to be punctuated at the end with a semicolon or period. Examples are provided in the full STEP House Style guide.

Names (people)
- Avoid using ‘Mr’, ‘Mrs’, etc. Use the person’s full name the first instance and surnames in the second, except when referring to STEP members in informal content (STEP News or interviews) for whom first names are used on subsequent mentions.

Names (organisations, etc.)
- Companies, organisations, departments, etc. are always singular, e.g., HMRC is preparing a response.
- Use ‘the’ before names of organisations, if you would do so when speaking, e.g., the OECD.
- Omit suffixes such as Ltd, LLP, plc, and GmbH in copy and in author by-lines.

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